

AUG 4 1967

Tshombe, Moise



MRS. TSHOMBE WITH SONS LEON (LEFT) & JEAN

Uncomfortable hangs the sword.

TSHOMBE IN ALGERIA

CONGO

A Certain Apprehension

Moise Tshombe was never very popular with his fellow Africans. He used white mercenaries to defend Katanga's secession from the Congo a few years ago. He showed little leniency to his enemies while in power, is widely believed to have been responsible for the death of Leftist Patrice Lumumba in 1961. He took care to line his pockets while in office and was living nicely in Madrid when the Congo sentenced him to death *in absentia* for treason earlier this year. Yet last week, as Tshombe remained imprisoned in Algeria, in imminent danger of being shipped back to the Congo, some Africans were feeling apprehension about the damage his execution might do to the international reputé, already shaky, of their nations. And politicians in the volatile African states glimpsed what might be, to say the least, an uncomfortable precedent.

Fear of Resentment. "As odious as his name may be to millions of Africans," said the East African Standard

in Nairobi, "it is no light matter to send a man to certain death with a sword hanging over his head." Calling for a "fair trial" for Tshombe, the Tanzania Standard warned the Congo that its actions could "further tarnish Africa's image. It could provide a precedent to hang like a sword of Damocles over other African leaders who openly support what, in effect, amounts to a blood lust." The U.S. has interceded with Congo President Joseph Mobutu to spare Tshombe's life, not only for humanitarian reasons but for fear that his execution might spark resentment, and perhaps even a new Congo revolt that could undermine Mobutu's regime. Such enlightened African leaders as the Ivory Coast's Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Léopold Senghor of Senegal are known to oppose any execution as crude blood revenge. And the spectacle of Tshombe's wife, Ruth, and one of her sons, Jean, 23, vainly pleading with the United Nations for a "world habeas corpus" to save her husband did arouse a measure of international sympathy.

All of this may not move Algerian President Houari Boumediene, who must give ultimate approval if Tshombe is to be extradited, but there were other factors that may have caused him to delay his decision. In exchange for Tshombe, Boumediene hopes to get Mobutu's support for Arab policies in the U.N. and perhaps also to loosen the Congo's close ties with Israel. His intelligence men may also want to get as much information as they can out of Tshombe, including the details of Lumumba's death, which some say Mobutu also had a hand in.

No Relenting. At the extradition hearings two weeks ago, Tshombe described himself bitterly as "a victim of my popularity," vaguely blamed the CIA for having a hand in his plight, and vowed: "I will go back to the Congo because I am a man." He may not have much choice. If Boumediene acts on the Algerian supreme court's recommendation that Tshombe be extradited, Tshombe will probably be returned to the Congo secretly and put to death quickly. Mobutu shows no signs of relenting, said last week that "the furor created over the Tshombe affair constitutes meddling in our internal affairs." Still, Tshombe may at least escape the fate of the four political enemies Mobutu executed last year: he declared a public holiday and hanged them before throngs in the square at Kinshasa.